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STATE FOR NEA/ELA, PM/RSAT

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SUBJECT: JORDAN'S TRANSFER TO LEBANON OF M60A3 TANKS

Classified By: Ambassador R. Stephen Beecroft for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Background: At the USG's request, Jordan agreed in November to upgrade and provide 66 M60A3 tanks to Lebanon to enhance the abilities and image of the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) as a national fighting force. As part of efforts to strengthen the LAF in advance of the June parliamentary elections, Jordan agreed that once funding was provided it would upgrade the first tranche of ten tanks with the Thermal Tank System (TTS) for delivery to the LAF in May. Jordan further agreed that once additional outside funding was secured for the remaining 56 tanks, it would upgrade them with the Integrated Fire Control System (IFCS) and deliver them to Lebanon 18-24 months later. The initial ten TTS tanks would then be sent back to Jordan to be further upgraded with IFCS to satisfy the LAF's requirement of 66 upgraded M60A3 IFCS tanks. The total cost was estimated to be USD 114 million.

¶2. (SBU) In a good faith effort to meet the May delivery date for the first ten tanks, the Jordan Armed Forces (JAF) approached Raytheon in November 2008 to identify the necessary parts to complete the upgrade. Raytheon, however, told the JAF that it could not acquire the necessary parts for the upgrade until it had a signed agreement with Jordan to supply them. The JAF has been waiting for the promised funds before signing such an agreement.

¶3. (C) As of March 3, Jordan has still not received USD 17 million for the initial tranche of ten tanks. Senior figures in the JAF have informed Post that the continuing delay has prevented them from securing the necessary parts from Raytheon to upgrade the tanks in time to transfer them to Lebanon before the Lebanese elections. They are concerned that Jordan will be blamed for not meeting this deadline, which they now consider "impossible."

¶4. (C) DATT asked General Khaled Sarayreh, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, if he could pull ten operational M60A3 IFCS tanks deployed with JAF units and transfer them to Lebanon, but Sarayreh refused citing the JAF's own operational requirements. The JAF's Director of Strategic Planning, Brigadier General Mohammad Farghal, has proposed two options for a way forward: 1) abandon the TTS upgrade of the initial ten tanks and proceed to upgrade all 66 with IFCS; 2) use the USD 17 million once secured from the UAE to provide alternative equipment from Jordan to Lebanon in advance of the June elections.

¶5. (C) The first option of proceeding to upgrade the 66 IFCS tanks would not provide the LAF with the pre-election boost that the tank transfer was originally intended to achieve. It would require the USG to look for the full USD 114 million from other third-country sources. On the second option, Post is unaware of other equipment that the LAF would be

interested in acquiring from Jordan but posits that it would require agreement from the UAE once funding is secured, as well as USG approval of any third-party transfer of U.S. equipment.

16. (C) Post believes the only way to ensure the transfer of ten upgraded M60A3 tanks to Lebanon by May would be to redeploy operational tanks from JAF units. Given Sarayreh's refusal, this would require direct intervention from the King, which Ambassador and DATT are prepared to seek if funding is forthcoming and Washington so instructs. This, however, might increase the cost of the first ten tanks because they would be IFCS instead of TTS.

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